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IN MEMORIAM.

REV. JOHN W. MERRILL, D. D.

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Merrill,
cl

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Merrill, J.W.
Merrill

Harvard Divinity School

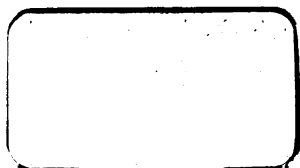


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A
MEMORIAL
OF
REV. JOHN WESLEY MERRILL, D.D.,
BY HIS SON
CHARLES AMOS MERRILL,
WITH TRIBUTES
BY
REV. WILLIAM F. WARREN, D.D., LL.D.,
PRESIDENT OF BOSTON UNIVERSITY,
AND
REV. FRANKLIN D. AYERS, D.D.,
OF CONCORD, N. H.

WORCESTER, MASS.
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311 MAIN STREET.
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MEMORIAL.

I WRITE this memorial of my father with filial pride. His great attainments have been admired, the results of his labors known, and his virtues and spotless life eulogized by others who have met him professionally and in his more public career. It was my privilege to know his private and inner life as a son and intimate companion.

Rev. Dr. JOHN WESLEY MERRILL was born at Chester, New Hampshire, May 9, 1808, and died in Concord, in that State, February 9, 1900, at the age of nearly ninety-two years.

His father was Rev. Joseph Annis Merrill of Wilbraham, Massachusetts, who for many years was one of the early itinerant ministers of the New England Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was a rugged man, rode a circuit of more than a hundred miles on horseback as Presiding Elder, and preached in barns, school-houses and in the open air,—a man of keen, logical mind. He was a pronounced abolitionist when it was not popular to condemn

slavery, was a champion of that little band of Methodists who mercilessly fought Calvinism when it was preached commonly and unqualifiedly, and was an advocate of temperance when the clergy was not entirely abstemious. He was a great organizer and one of the leading men of his denomination. He was one of the founders of Wesleyan Academy at Wilbraham, and was a delegate from his conference to the general conference of his Church.

His mother was Hannah Jewett Merrill, a woman of great personal beauty, which she possessed till late in life; eminent in virtue and religion, devoted to her Church, and self-sacrificing in rearing a family of ten children to manhood and womanhood.

Rev. Dr. Merrill came from English stock, and was a direct descendant from Nathaniel Merrill, who was born at Salisbury, England, in 1610; settled in Newbury, Massachusetts, in 1633 or 1634; was one of the original proprietors of that town, and died there March 16, 1655.

His grandfather, Annis Merrill of Newbury, was a Revolutionary soldier, who first enlisted in May, 1775, fought at Bunker Hill and elsewhere; was in turn private, drummer, corporal

and sergeant, and was discharged November 25, 1781. He was a shoemaker by trade.

His brothers Amos B. Merrill, late of Boston, and Annis Merrill, formerly of Boston and afterwards of San Francisco, were both distinguished lawyers. The latter is now living at the age of ninety. His brothers David and Nathaniel became Methodist ministers. The latter is now living at the age of eighty-three.

He prepared for college at Newmarket and Wilbraham Academies, Maine Wesleyan Seminary, Kent's Hill, Maine, and entered Bowdoin College in 1830. In his sophomore year he left Bowdoin and entered Wesleyan University, where he graduated in 1834. The same year he entered Andover Theological Seminary, and graduated at that institution in 1837, the subject of his Commencement address being "The Characteristics of Rationalism (so called) as Developed in the Interpretation of the Scriptures." In that year he was elected president of McKendree College at Lebanon, Illinois, where he remained until 1841. In 1844, that college conferred upon him the degree of doctor of divinity. In 1841, he resigned the presidency of McKendree by

reason of an offer of the professorship of Sacred Literature in the Wesleyan Theological Institute at Newbury, Vermont, which afterwards became the Methodist General Biblical Institute at Concord, New Hampshire. This offer proved premature through lack of funds, and he at once took a station at East Boston, within the jurisdiction of the New England Conference. Here he organized the first Methodist Church of that place and became its pastor.

Upon being informed that he had accepted the call to the professorship at Newbury, the trustees of McKendree offered to establish a professorship of Sacred Literature at that college and endow it, if he would remain there and take that position additional to the presidency, but the offer came too late, and he insisted upon his resignation.

In 1842, he was elected principal of Newbury Academy, but declined the position.

In 1842, he married Emily Huse, the daughter of Enoch and Hannah Woodman Huse of Newburyport. She died August 13, 1886.

Three sons now survive him,—Charles Amos, a lawyer, practising in Worcester; Edward

Annis, an invalid, living in Concord, New Hampshire; and Col. Elijah Hedding, agent of the Standard Oil Company, living in San Francisco, California.

From 1842 to 1854, he was stationed at Ashburnham, South Boston, Boston Highlands, Lynn Common, Dorchester, East Cambridge and Saxonville, all in Massachusetts.

In 1854, he was assigned by the New England Conference to a professorship in the Methodist General Biblical Institute at Concord, New Hampshire, as a station, and remained there till 1868, when it was removed to Boston, and became the theological department of Boston University. Fourteen classes graduated under his teaching, and two classes which began their course at Concord finished at Boston.

In 1868, he resumed the pastoral work, was stationed at Quincy Point, Southampton and Ludlow, Mass., and retired to his home at Concord, N. H., in 1873, where he spent the remainder of his days.

The story of his life is briefly told. I have no recollection that my father received over one thousand dollars a year at any one of his sta-

tions, and am quite certain that he did not receive over twelve hundred dollars a year while professor at Concord.

To feed, clothe and educate a family of seven children upon such a pittance was no easy task. It meant the most rigid economy, closest calculation, self-denial and much hardship. The Churches were then poor. Most of their communicants were of the laboring classes or persons of small means. The love of God and man was dominant in the hearts of the early ministers of the Methodist Church and their wives, to have enabled them to submit to such conditions of life without rebellion. They must have had an overwhelming sense of duty and the spirit of martyrs.

It was, however, by the self-sacrifice of such men and women that Churches were to be established and flourish in after years; and the wonderful progress of the Methodist denomination in America is largely due to the devotion of its early ministers and their wives to its welfare, through toil and hardship.

In physique, until past middle life, he was slight, of medium height, erect carriage, with a mild blue eye, aquiline nose, strong mouth,

hollow cheeks, high forehead and sallow complexion. His full beard, touched with grey, was clipped short. He was scrupulously neat in dress. In later years, his beard was allowed to grow, and his face showed the marks of incessant labor. He was very muscular and alert. Upon the cessation of his professional life he became more corpulent, and with his long eyebrows, snow-white moustache and long white beard he looked the patriarch.

Always polite, deferential, courteous, avoiding everything which could annoy others, with a suavity of manner and address which was very attractive, he was an old-school gentleman.

~~He never used glasses to~~ read with. As he

W. H. Murray

Mr. Charles F. Merrill

W. H. M. M.

became seriously ill that when the Boston School of the chair of a profession the work of a his last years to the t he could perform

it. I can well remember how happy he was upon his first station after his professorship ended. It was his first vacation after more than a dozen years of constant labor. The change

from the classroom to the pulpit was to him complete rest.

The stoop of age gradually came upon him. Nature began to draw on him drafts for what he had expended in former years. He honored them so far as he could, but soon felt that he must stop payment. He retired to his old home in Concord to spend his declining years in comfort and peace, but his mind could not rest. He reviewed his classics and mathematics, and continued their study till his death. He rewrote his lectures, and kept pace with the advance of science and philosophic thought. Occasionally, he preached in the various local pulpits, not only of his own denomination but of others. He gave liberally to the Church where he worshipped and to the great causes he had at heart.

One of the clergymen who officiated at his funeral, pointing to his casket, said: "There lies the body of the most humble man I ever knew." A short time before his death, I heard him say: "My life is nearly spent. I have accomplished very little."

His diffidence, lack of aggression and self-assertion were always impediments to his fame,

if not his usefulness. Had he published his writings, had his temperament been combative, had he engaged more frequently in public debate, had he pushed forward into notice, had he demanded on all occasions his due, had he resorted to policy and intrigue to obtain publicity and recognition, his influence would have been wider and the world would have known him better. These things were repulsive to his feelings and contrary to his nature.

In the early part of his home life, he was severe, a fact I have since heard him sincerely regret. This was due to many causes. His intense labor made him exceedingly nervous. He failed to appreciate the longings of youth for sport, and was seldom contented unless his children were studying. The problem of their support and education troubled him. He hesitated to allow them to come in contact with the world, and strict discipline of children was the custom of his times. As his family outgrew paternal authority, his severity mollified. He became the counsellor instead of the governor, and a sweet confidence and intimacy sprang up between him and every member of his household, which increased till his death. Love took the

place of fear. Companionship succeeded authority. His family life became ideal.

His pastime was fishing. He became very skilful in catching pickerel with a hook and line. At first, it was an exercise suggested by a physician, but it grew to a passion. To this cause may be attributed his long life. I accompanied him on a fishing excursion in his ninetieth year, when he trolled for pickerel for several hours, standing in his boat.

His success with the hook and line was a matter of comment among the fishermen where he lived. If a fish whirled at his bait, he located if he did not catch it. That was enough, for he persevered till he caught it. The ponds and rivers of Massachusetts and New Hampshire contributed largely to the family table.

He took great pleasure in his garden, which he brought to the highest state of cultivation.

To his wife he owed much of his success. She was an educated and saintly woman, content with her sacrifice of personal comfort to promote the work in which her husband was engaged. She comforted him by her love, upheld him by her wise counsels, administered his domestic affairs with remarkable economy and

sagacity, aided him in the social meetings and work of the Churches in his charge, rejoiced with him in prosperity and gave him her sympathy in adversity. She was a devoted mother. Her husband and four of her seven children survived her.

By the munificence of his brothers Amos and Annis he was made comfortable in his declining years, and relieved of all temporal anxiety.

He had a poetic nature. Since his death, I have found among his papers many poems, some of which are the fugitive expressions of love to the fair friends of his early life; some, hymns full of religious sentiment; some, descriptive of nature; some, pathetic lamentations over the loss of his children and friends; some, tributes of affection to his devoted wife. While many are defective in mechanism, they all exhibit the spirit of poetry. Among the mountains he was constantly discovering forms of men and animals in the rocks, or peopling the caverns by the seaside with water sprites. He pointed out strange figures in the sky, and heard songs in the whistling winds. He loved the brooks and rivers, the hills and plains of New England, and they inspired him. He passionately loved music, but could not sing.

He was a naturalist. Whether bird, animal, reptile or flower came within his observation, he eagerly examined it and classified it. I remember accompanying him in a walk over Mount Washington. He had strayed away and caused considerable anxiety by his absence. He was found seated between two rocks, gathering mosses above the clouds, utterly oblivious to his surroundings or the approach of night. He kept several swarms of bees in his garden, not for their honey, but because he loved to see them work and to study their habits. They came to know him and he held them in his hand. He waded across many a brook to pluck flowers of peculiar shape or color, and often returned home at night with his pockets filled with stones. I saw him stand upon a river bank in a pelting rain watching a roach prepare a sandy basin in which to deposit her eggs, and a horned pout marshal her wiggling young. He was familiar with birds in the woods and fields of New England, and loved to describe their color, habits and notes. His horse used to place her head upon his shoulder and lap his snow-white beard. He loved animals and they loved him.

The vivid lightning and storm; a torrent in

the springtime rushing over the rocks, and through deep gorges; the tempest-tossed ocean dashing against the New England coast,—held him spell-bound. They appealed to his love of everything in nature, grand and sublime. He described them in verse. I have seen him standing bareheaded upon his piazza watching a terrific thunder-storm, the while humming a hymn. In everything created he saw God's handiwork. To him the earth was beautiful, and he had no desire to leave it. He was constantly discovering something he had not before noticed in animal or vegetable life or in minerals and stones, and loved to watch the ever-changing formations of the clouds and point out their peculiar faces and shapes. I can never forget the picture of that venerable man standing alone upon a projecting rock near the top of Mount Washington, his long hair blown back, rapt in admiration as he watched the sun go down and the line of darkness creep up the hills, putting out of sight all below it and leaving all above it light as the day.

He was a classical scholar. Of all his books, he took most pride in an old Latin dictionary, awarded him as a prize for excellence in that

language, by Principal Moses White, while a student at Newmarket Academy. Its covers are worn round and its pages yellow with age.

Throughout his after-life he continued his reading of the Greek and Latin poets and prose writers. In his ninetieth year, he read the works of Cicero on old age and friendship, and his letters to Atticus. His translations of Horace and the Satires of Juvenal were in elegant English, the former reduced to rhyme. For years, at family prayers, he read selections from the Greek Testament as fluently as from the version of King James. Of the Greek authors, his favorites were Sophocles and Euripedes. His translations of the Medea were charming. Of the classic writers of antiquity there were very few with which he was not familiar. He did not believe there was, or could be, any substitute for classical study in the education of the young. He was a fine Hebrew scholar, and whenever the professor who taught that language at the Biblical Institute was indisposed, he taught his classes. I remember with great pleasure his beautiful translation of the Psalms.

He was a scientist. His favorite pastime was geometry. While at Saxonville, Massachusetts, he became intimate with Mr. Eastwood, who at one time made the computations for the nautical almanac and was a noted mathematician. Together, they worked upon the most intricate problems and demonstrations. He used to say, "Nothing so rests my mind as geometry." In his later years, he read much of the higher mathematics, and was a master of the calculus. He was a lover of astronomy, and used to stand in his garden by the hour, studying the geography of the heavens. The laws which govern the sea, deep-sea soundings, the force of the waves, the tides, were subjects to which he gave much thought. To the end of his life he kept up a constant interest in geology and the discovery of fossils, animal and vegetable.

He was especially fond of works treating of the laws of heat, electricity, light and sound. He used to say, "When the force of gravitation can be turned to practical uses the greatest power known to man will be his servant." He talked in the most fascinating manner upon all these subjects and with astonishing familiarity, asking questions of his hearer to learn his views,

and would often speculate upon the possibilities of future discovery.

No department of science escaped his investigation to some extent, and he often expressed the hope that the mysteries of the universe which he could not grasp would be revealed to him hereafter.

A short time before his death, I heard him mention the inventions and the progress of scientific discovery which had been made during his life. His memory was remarkable, reaching back nearly a hundred years, to his infancy.

He was impatient with any writer who reasoned upon unproved premises, sometimes expressing his disgust very forcibly concerning conclusions not based upon well-established facts. His criticisms were severe upon all pseudo-science. To his mind, there was a wide distinction between probabilities or possibilities and science. His perceptive faculties were so delicate and acute that the slightest deviation from logical reasoning by a writer upon scientific subjects seemed to pain him, because of the injury it might cause.

He was a philosopher. The faculties of his mind were quick to detect error of statement,

however concealed by verbiage. He exhibited this power in a marked degree at an early age. He was a logician by nature. A false premise or false conclusion was repugnant to him.

While a student at Andover he became an intimate friend of Dr. Woods, one of his professors. His suggestions made in the classroom awakened a lively interest in the mind of the learned doctor, for they were thrusts which reached the heart of Calvinism. In the many walks in which he enjoyed the company of his friend, he opened to him the difficulties which he found in accepting the doctrines of predestination as then taught. Their discussions were earnest but friendly; and instead of awakening hostility, led to a friendship seldom existing between student and teacher. Their differences in theology remained. The professor afterwards spent a Sunday with and preached for him at Ashburnham.

Upon entering the pastorate, he found that the theology of his day was becoming tinctured with materialism and the theories of German philosophy, and he then began the study of them. He mastered Kant, Hegel, Comte, Schlegel and all the other leading philosophic

writers of France and Germany. In his copies of their works are his foot-notes in pencil, and annotations in the margins of the pages. They bear witness to the thoroughness of his reading. A short time before his death, he wrote from memory, in a few moments, for my instruction, a full analysis of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, and illustrated it by a diagram now in my possession. It gave him great pleasure when one would listen to his analyses of the writings of those older philosophers, with which he was so perfectly familiar. In the later years of his life, he read with scholarly interest the works of the more modern—Spencer, Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, Le Comte, Haeckel and others; and while he admired the ability they displayed, often criticised their reasoning and conclusions.

His unpublished works on Natural Theology are a monument to his industry and investigations. They show a remarkable familiarity with geological research and scientific investigation, and answer in advance many of the positions assumed by philosophers long afterwards. Withal, his intense and incessant study made him charitable toward the opinion of others, for he saw so clearly the reason of their

errors, and how they reached their conclusions. Toward the true scholar his charity of opinion was without limit.

He was a theologian. He was a master of church history and taught it. Rev. Dr. Prentice, formerly a professor at the Wesleyan University, and once his student, remarked: "He was the best read man in church history of all the scholars I ever knew. His memory was prodigious. I tried to catch him in the classroom by asking him about some obscure writer of the early Church, concerning whom I thought little was known. He spent half an hour talking about him and his writings. He seemed to know all the old fathers and everything they ever did or said. He was a most remarkable man."

He numbered among his friends many of the most eminent theological scholars of his time, and they were visitors at his home. Conversant with the various phases of theological thought from the earlier times, he used to delight in telling others of the origin and history of doctrine. His range of study extended to the occult philosophy of India. One of his students, a missionary to India, writes: "Without your

teachings while I was your student, I could not have contended with the scholars of this country with any success. I owe everything to your instruction."

He was best known to the world as a profound theologian.

He was not a controversialist, and disliked public disputation and notoriety. His forums were the classroom and his library where he received his friends.

As a preacher, his sermons were for the most part written, and all of pure style. A large volume of them in manuscript remain. He often labored for months on a sermon, giving it careful and mature thought. His life as a preacher was spent in pulpits where sermons were accustomed to be preached without notes, in a hortatory manner, and where little else than emotional appeals were acceptable, save to a few of the more thoughtful of his congregation. By these few, and by the cultivated and educated people of the communities in which he lived, he was invariably appreciated. He was repeatedly, and with flattering inducements, urged to change his church connection, but he devotedly loved the denomination to which he belonged, and its

doctrines, and remained steadfast. He lived to see the day when that denomination, in the scholarly ability of its clergy and the general intelligence of its communicants, became the peer of any other. To aid in accomplishing that result was the great labor of his life.

He was not an orator, having neither the presence, voice or magnetism requisite for moving the masses. His appeals were to the reason—quiet, earnest and thoughtful. He never preached without the most careful preparation. The influence of Professor Park of Andover and Dr. Wilbur Fisk of Middletown, who were his ideals from early life, had much to do with the formation of his character as a preacher. His sermons were always elevating, instructive and serious. He was never flippant or careless of utterance, and always avoided dramatic effort.

He was a great teacher. As President of McKendree College, he gave to that institution of learning an impetus which continues to be felt. During his administration he obtained its charter with full university privileges. He early saw the necessity of establishing a college in the then new West, and looked forward to the time

when it would become prominent as an educational power, fostered by its own sons. That hope has now been fully realized. This college was the second, if not the first, institution of learning with the rank of a college, established in America under the patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church. From its walls have graduated men who have graced the bench and bar by their learning, the pulpit by their ability, the halls of legislation by their eloquence and statesmanship, and the walks of business by their enterprise and integrity. Had his educational labors ceased there, he would have accomplished more than falls to the lot of most men.

The great work of his life was accomplished after he left McKendree and became a professor in the Methodist General Biblical Institute. The chair he believed he was to receive was that of Homiletics and Sacred Theology. By some manœuvering this position was given to another, and he accepted the professorship of Ethics, Metaphysics and Natural and Historical Theology. He believed, and with reason, that he would receive at Concord what was offered him at Newbury, when he was called from McKendree.

It was perhaps fortunate for the young men who came under his instruction that this change in his work was made; not because he was not eminently qualified to fill the chair to which he was first called, and was so regarded, but because he developed and exhibited such remarkable ability in dealing with the abstruse science of metaphysics, in his analysis and teaching of Butler's Analogy, and in his lectures upon Natural and Historical Theology, wherein he considered the great questions of philosophy then and afterwards presented by the scientists of the world.

It is no disparagement of the earnest and learned men who were associated with him as professors in the Biblical Institute, to assert the then generally admitted and known fact, that the great weight and labor of instruction in that school during the years of his connection with it was carried and performed by Professor Merrill. During that period he never failed in attendance upon his classes, unless confined to his home by sickness. He often did the work of others, additional to his own.

I am not aware that there were any prescribed scholastic attainments required for admission to

that institution. I am certain that graduation from college was not a prerequisite. In the classroom, cultivated, college-bred men sat beside clerks fresh from behind the counters of mercantile houses and men from workshops, with no qualifications save their desire to fit themselves to become ministers of the gospel. Yet, from this latter material were formed, moulded and educated many who afterwards took high rank and filled important positions, not only in the denomination by which they were instructed, but in the pulpits of other denominations.

The great reasons for his success as a teacher were the care and attention he bestowed upon the individual students to whom he lectured, not permitting any one to pass over anything without understanding it; the personal interest he felt and took in the young men who were preparing to enter the several conferences of the Church to which they belonged; the faculty he had for making plain the most difficult things and fastening them in the memory; his own clear perception and understanding of the subjects upon which he lectured.

I have often heard the learned divines who

acted as a committee of the patronizing conferences of that institution to attend its examinations, express their admiration and wonder at the familiarity of his students with the subjects they had studied.

Nothing seemed to pain him so much as to observe in any one of his students a tendency to superficiality, or a neglect of work.

In view of these facts, it is not to be wondered at that he won and retained the love and confidence of every one who was fortunate enough to be under his instruction, and that during his after life his old students so often wrote to him from all parts of the world letters expressive of their gratitude and esteem.

The year before his death, the United States Consul at Foochow, China, Rev. Dr. Gracey, wrote him:—

“Your boys of old McKendree and Concord Biblical are scattered around the world, while many more have crossed the narrow stream which rolls between us and the heavenly home;” “I just wished that I could again look into your bright eyes and hear your mild, tender voice of yore, and for myself tell you how much I respect and love you.” “I sat at

your feet and learned so much that helped to fit me for life's great work. Even yet I feel the pressure of your soft, kind hand and hear the encouraging and helpful words which fell from your lips. Dear old Concord Biblical! How widely her sons are scattered and what grand work many of them have done." "May God bless and keep you in perfect peace is the prayer of one of your boys."

In the matter of ministerial education he stood shoulder to shoulder with Drs. Fisk, Warren, Cummings and other illustrious divines, in advocating the highest standard of scholarly attainment. With them, he felt the absolute necessity of thorough knowledge of philosophy, science and theology, not only for the proper presentation of truth, but for the exposure of and contest with error. He believed that God, in his providence, had confided to the clergymen of his denomination in an especial manner the education and elevation of the masses, and that to accomplish that trust it was imperative for them to be thoroughly equipped. Whatever he said upon the floor of the conference or elsewhere relating to education, was received with marked attention and had great influence.

He was a devoted Christian. His heart went out to all men in charity and love. He had a most unwavering faith in God, and in Christ as his personal Saviour. His whole active life was spent in leading his fellow-men to a higher plane of living. Enduring poverty and hardship of the utmost severity, he regarded them as nothing, so he could by his preaching or teaching elevate mankind. His private life was pure and undefiled. I question whether he ever had an ignoble thought. His only purpose was the performance of duty. No matter where he was sent to labor by the authorities of his Church, he went there like a soldier to the picket-line, without fear or question. His convictions were deep and strong. A short time before his death he said to me, "Nothing in science, true science, can contradict the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, for both are true." Such is the testimony of one familiar with every phase of modern philosophy.

Throughout his life he exemplified the Christian virtues. He was patient in adversity, charitable toward all, benevolent in many instances beyond his means, loyal to Christ and his Church, visiting the sick and comforting the

bereaved. He lost no opportunity to sow the good seed of his religion, and never was repulsed, for his suggestions were always timely, discreet and welcomed. They were never obtrusive. People of whatever creed, nationality or station, looked up to him as a good man. Clergymen of every sect became his friends, and Catholic priests counselled with him concerning the advancement and moral elevation of their congregations. He antagonized no one, but gave aid to every good work. He won the fallen and down-trodden by taking a personal interest in them and their temporal welfare. By his quiet influence and example he elevated every community in which he lived. He was a devout man, and kept his conscience clear of offence toward God and man. He was wholly devoid of religious cant, and talked to men about their souls as the most important business they could consider. By his direct appeals to individual men, he turned many from evil to honorable pursuits and a religious life.

He was especially happy in his intercourse with children. I have seen him instruct them by the hour in the great discoveries of science, by telling them stories and answering their

sometimes puzzling questions, while they clambered upon his knees and placed their little arms about his neck, all the while giving him the closest attention. He weaved into his tales religious truths which entered their young minds, never to be forgotten. Among the most afflicted mourners at his funeral were the young people where he worshipped at the time of his death. They all loved him.

At his death, the newspapers published many obituary notices of him, some of which have come to my attention, containing words eulogistic of his life and character.

One of these, referring to his connection with McKendree College, says:—

“The present charter of the institution was secured under the administration of Dr. Merrill, whose death is now chronicled, and by the assistance of the late President Lincoln.” . . .
 “Dr. Merrill was a man of high scholastic attainments, and while the date of his coming here was an early period in the history of the State of Illinois, he nevertheless felt that this was the spot where a great institution of learning should be built, and, in providing the new charter, secured for it the largest university privileges. So it will be seen that the invaluable service

rendered by Dr. Merrill and his compeers was of a prophetic character, and the work that is now being done is in fulfilment of the large conceptions which these men had concerning the importance of McKendree as a great educational centre more than fifty years ago." "Dr. Merrill, after leaving McKendree, returned to the East." "His career has been a great one, for the figure which he has cut in educational and religious circles will give his name a lasting remembrance in the annals of church history." "The great service of Dr. Merrill here at McKendree will hold a permanent place in the history of the institution, magnifying more and more as the interests of the college are advanced, until the dream of his early youth shall have been realized in fulfilment."

Another says:—

"Rev. Dr. Merrill, for more than half a century, has been justly known as one of the most eminent scholars of the Methodist Episcopal Church. To him and his unflinching contentions for the adoption of the highest standards in education, is largely due the marvellous and unrivalled advancement in scholarly attainment by the clergy of his denomination. His pupils are scattered all over the world as ministers and

teachers. Many of them occupy high positions in the churches, and have looked to him for advice many years after they had ceased to be his students. To such men belongs an immortality of influence which must increase and be felt long after its origin has been forgotten."

Another says:—

"Professor Merrill was a man of strength, physically, mentally and morally. He did much to uplift the cause of education in his denomination, and ranked in his prime as one of its best men."

Another says:—

"At noon to-day Rev. John Wesley Merrill, one the most distinguished clergymen and theologians in the Methodism of the century, passed away. He had been ill several months, the result of a general breaking up. He was loved far and wide, and known by many clergymen whom he had tutored. Most of Dr. Merrill's years have been passed in this city, where he has been held in highest esteem." "Dr. Merrill was always a student, having pursued the study of languages beyond his ninetieth year. He was a remarkable specimen of well-preserved physical manhood, and up to within a year past was frequently seen upon the streets

making his way with the quick, elastic steps of one bearing not half his years."

Others breathe the same spirit of admiration for him as a man and scholar.

While he appreciated the love and esteem of his fellow-men, the conscientious performance of duty, the elevation and ennobling of mankind and a sense of the approval of his Heavenly Father, were the mainsprings of his life and his inspiration.

He did not live till old age had blighted his powers by its withering touch, but died with every faculty of his mind in full vigor and unimpaired. He loved life, but was ready to die. He fell asleep, and passed away like a child entering the land of dreams.

With Paul he could truly say:—

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

MEMOIR.*

John Wesley Merrill—each name a crown of honor—was born in Chester, N. H., May 9, 1808; nearly ninety-two years later, on the 9th of February, 1900, his spirit returned to God who gave it. He was the eldest of the ten children of Joseph Annis and Hannah (Jewett) Merrill, the former for many years a distinguished preacher and Presiding Elder of the New England Conference. His earliest American ancestor, Nathaniel Merrill, born in Salisbury, England, in 1610, was one of the original proprietors of Newbury, Massachusetts. The family there started on American soil was destined to give to our Church a larger number of teachers, preachers and official laymen than any other so far as known in all New England.

The subject of the present sketch was converted at the age of eleven at the first camp-meeting in Barre, Vermont. His family having moved to Newmarket, N. H., in 1820, he enjoyed for several years the advantages of Wesleyan Academy at that place, as afterwards at Wilbraham. In his seventeenth year, after a special examination, he received from Wilbur Fisk a certificate of fitness to teach a district school; and his first engagement in this capacity was the same year in Ashburnham. In 1827 he was licensed to exhort, and in 1828 to preach. In 1830 he entered

* Read at the Memorial Services of the New England Conference, Fitchburg, Mass., April 9, 1900, by Rev. Dr. W. F. Warren.

Bowdoin College, where he studied two years; then Wesleyan University having been opened he removed to Middletown and was graduated in the second class, that of 1834. Thence, he went to Andover Theological Seminary, whose three years' course he completed under the inspiring instruction of Professors Moses Stuart, Edwards A. Park, and others of that day. He appears to have been the first New England preacher of our communion who added to a thorough collegiate training the advantages of a full theological course.

In 1837, the year of his graduation at Andover, he was elected President of McKendree College, an institution which had been chartered by the Illinois Legislature three years before. Among those recorded as voting for the charter stands the name of a then rising young lawyer destined to fame, Abraham Lincoln. The following year President Merrill joined the Illinois Conference, and at Alton, September 28, was ordained a local elder. His ordination as a local deacon had been by Bishop James O. Andrew at Hartford, Connecticut, May 11, 1834. In 1840 he was chosen Professor of Biblical Literature in the new Biblical Institute, then a department of Newbury Seminary, at Newbury, Vermont, and was transferred to the New England Conference in the fall of 1841. Until the session in the Spring he labored in East Boston, and there organized the first Methodist Church on that Island. The following year, in Newburyport, the home of his ancestors, he married Miss Emily Huse, a woman of rare grace and character, with whom he was permitted to spend forty-four happy wedded years.

His early appointments in the Conference were the following: 1842, Ashburnham; 1843, South Boston; 1844-45, Roxbury; 1846-47, Lynn Common Street; 1848-49, Dorchester; 1850-51, East Cambridge; 1852-53, Saxonville.

In 1854 he was appointed Professor of Ethics, Metaphysics, Natural and Historical Theology in the Concord Biblical Institute, which position he held until the removal of the institution to Boston in 1867. His remaining pastoral appointments were to the following places: Quincy Point, 1868; Southampton, 1869-70; Ludlow, 1871-72.

A serious impairment of the sense of hearing greatly restricted his comfort and usefulness in all the later years of his active life; but to those who knew him best the infirmity only rendered more conspicuous the inner resources of the man's own personality, the abounding sunshine of his serene and saintly spirit.

As a preacher Dr. Merrill was didactic in aim, methodical in style, deliberate in utterance. At times, however, borne aloft by his own kindled emotions, he touched high ranges of true and effective eloquence.

His highest aptitudes were undoubtedly those which characterized him as a teacher. Greatly did he endear himself to his disciples. To all of them he seemed to stand in the relation of a father. One of them writes of him as follows:—

“He certainly taught us to think closely, and the method of his classwork called out the best that we could think and the best that we could say.”
 “He was no bloodless scholastic, but very human and tender toward the callow fledglings under his care. He often wandered in his thought to some simple truth

of the Gospel, and as the philosopher gave way to the preacher a tear would start in his eye and a hush steal over the class."

Another tells us that in starting his class in the study of Sir William Hamilton's "Philosophy" his favorite exhortation was the following:—

"*'Bear on hard and long.'*" "*'As the blade is held to the grindstone till the sparks fly, so hold your mind to this study till the sparks fly!'*" "Then the sparks would fly from the eyes of the dear old Professor till the class was illuminated and inspired."

John W. Merrill was one of the century plants of our Lord's Eden. He never reached a full blossom until on the ninth day of last February he was transplanted to the palm gardens of the New Jerusalem. His flower and fruit will have to be sought on the bank of the river of the water of life. And they will not be unworthy of the world-historic name he bore. In no respect was he more remarkable than in this, that he always seemed far greater than anything he attempted or accomplished. Though conducting no great administration, we ever credited him with the exceptional wisdom required for such a work. Though printing no books, we ever believed him capable of producing such as would have illuminated his generation. In every direction he seemed to illustrate the fact that great men are more easily discerned in rare qualities of character than in the deeds to which they may be called.

TRIBUTE

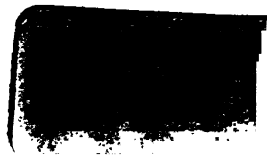
BY REV. FRANKLIN D. AYERS, D.D.

“Professor Merrill was built for service. His strong body he regarded as a gift for work, and every capacity of mind he held obedient to the call of God and his fellow-men. He felt that God’s messenger should be a man of clear vision ; and therefore held to an educated ministry, and devoted his efforts to uplifting the intellectual and spiritual tone of the preachers. He was also anxious that the whole people be levelled upward, and that educational privileges should be open to all. He enjoyed the fellowship of educated men, and was specially helpful in giving counsel to young ministers and encouraging them in every earnest endeavor. His religious spirit was marked by deep humility, reverence and faith. He had deep convictions as to the necessity of trust in Christ for salvation, and to him that trust was certain victory. Diligent and conscientious in his work, he was always loyal to the great doctrines of the cross, for which he chiefly cared and which he desired simply and earnestly to preach. He was a man of excellent judgment and practical ability. He heartily loved the Church of his choice, and left a long and noble record of service to it.” *

* From Andover Necrology.

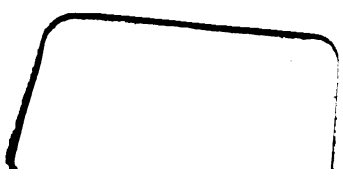


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